A Comparative Study of the Poetry of Fergusson and Burns

by Lena Swick

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Submitted to the Department of English of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE POETRY OF FERGUSSON AND BURNS.

This study which was suggested by Prof. S. L. Whitcomb and undertaken by his direction, has for its purpose the discovery of the power and influence of the poems of Robert Fergusson on the poems of Burns as well as a comparison of similar and dissimilar characteristics in the work of the two men.

Every writer on Burns, who discusses his work to any length at all, emphasizes the fact that Burns's work is the flower and culmination of Scotch poetry but that he drew inspiration, subjects, spirit, and verse forms from his predecessors. Among these poetical forbears are Henryson, Dunbar, Douglas, Lindsay, Semphill, Ramsay, and Fergusson. Robert Fergusson, while not the only model for Burns, was nearest to him in point of time and the one to whom Burns himself most often acknowledges his indebtedness.

(Burns's Poetical Works. Vol. I.)

In 1782, when Burns was at Irvine, he read Fergusson's Poems which had been collected and published in 1773. Of them, he says, "Rhymes, except for some religious pieces, I had given up, but meeting with Fergusson's Scotch Poems, I strung anew my wildly

sounding rustic lyre with emulating vigor."

In 1785, Burns writes in the First Epistle to J. Lapraik - "O for a spunk o' Allan's glee (A Ramsay)

Or Fergusson's, the bauld an' slee."

and again in the Epistle to William Simson, three times he mentioned Fergusson, as follows -

"Or Fergusson, the writer-chiel,
A deathless name.
(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry!")

and again "Ramsay an' famous Fergusson

Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;"

(Burns's Poetical Works. Vol. I.)

In 1786, in the preface to the First Edition, Kilmarnock, Burns explains his feeling toward two of his predecessors in these words - "If any Critic catches at the word genius, the Author tells him, that he looks upon himself as possest of some poetic abilities, otherwise publishing in the manner he has done, would be a ma-

noevre below the worst character his worst enemy will ever give him; but to the genius of a Ramsay or the glorious dawnings of the poor unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares that, even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch Poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces; but rather with a view to kindle at their flame, than for servile imitation."

In a copy of Fergusson's Poems presented by Burns to a young lady in Edinburgh and dated March 19, 1787, were written these lines:

"Curse on ungrateful man that can be pleased,
And yet can starve the author of the pleasure.
O thou, my elder brother in misfortune,
By far my elder brother in the Muses,
With tears, I pity thy unhappy fate!
Why is the Bard unpitied by the world,
Yet has so keen a relish of its pleasures?"

Later in 1792, Burns again writes:

"Ill-fated genius! Heaven-taught Fergusson,
What heart that feels and will not yield a tear
To think Life's sun did set ere well begun
To shed its influence on thy bright career.

O why should truest Worth and Genius pine
Beneath the iron grasp of Want and Woe,
While titled knaves and idiot-Greatness shine
In all the splendour Fortune can bestow?"

(Poetical Works of Robt. Burns.)

When in 1786, Burns made his first visit to Edinburgh, he was not long in the city, we are told by Cunningham, until he found his way to the old church yard, in the Canongate. The bleak aspect of the unmarked grave moved him to tears as he knelt down and kissed the sod. But his regard did not end with this emotional outburst. Soon afterward, he sent a petition to the manager of the churchyard. Part of the petition read: " I am sorry to be told that the remains of Robert Fergusson, the so justly celebrated poet, a man whose talent for ages to come will do honour to our Caledonian name, lie in your churchyard among the ignoble dead, unnoticed and unknown. Some memorial to direct the steps of the lovers of Scottish song, when they shed a tear over the "narrow house" of the bard who is no more, is surely a tribute due to Fergusson's memory; - - - I petition you, gentlemen, to permit me to lay a simple stone over the revered ashes, to remain an inalienable

property to his deathless fame." The request was granted and inscribed on the stone were the words: "Here lies Robert Fergusson, Poet. Born Sept. 5th, 1751. Died Oct. 16, 1774." and the verse -

"No sculptured Marble here, nor pompous lay,
No storied Urn nor animated Bust;
This simple Stone directs pale Scotia's way
To pour her Sorrows o'er her Poet's Dust."

Additional stanzas to the one on the monument were found in Burns's manuscript book of early poems, supposed to have been transcribed for Mrs. Dunlop, which read:

"She mourns, sweet tuneful youth, thy hapless fate;
Though all the powers of song thy fancy fired,
Yet Luxury and Wealth lay by in state,
And, thankless, starv'd what they so much admired,
This tribute, with a tear, now gives
A brother Bard - he can no more bestow;
But dear to fame they Song immortal lives,
A nobler monument than Art can show."
(Burns's Poetical Works.)

In this connection it is rather interesting to note in the letters of R. L. Stevenson, one written from Vailima in May, 1894 to Charles Baxter in Edinburgh and containing the following: " I had always a great sense

of kinship with poor Robert Fergusson - so clever a boy, so wild, of such a mixed strain, so unfortunate, born in the same town with me, and, as I always felt, rather by intimation than from evidence, so like myself. Now the injustice with which the one Robert (Burns) is rewarded and the other left out in the cold sets heavy on me, and I wish you could think of some way in which I could do honour to my unfortunate namesake. Do you think it would look like affectation to dedicate a whole edition of my books to his memory? I think it would. - - - - and besides, I think my wife is the proper person to receive the dedication of my life's work. At the same time, - - - - I feel I must do something for Fergusson; Burns has been before me with the gravestone. It occurs to me you might take a walk down the Canongate and see in what condition the stone is. If it be at all uncared for, we might repair it and perhaps add a few words of inscription. - - -
I wonder if an inscription like this would look arrogant - 'This stone originally erected by Robert Burns has been repaired at the charges of Robert Louis Stevenson, and is by him rededicated to the memory of Robert Fergusson, as the gift of one Edinburgh lad to another.' In spacing the inscription, I would detach the names of Fergusson and Burns, but leave mine in the text. Or would that look

like sham modesty, and is it better to bring out the three Roberts?" However the stone was not in need of repair and Stevenson's inscription was never placed there. Before this time, in 1891, Stevenson had written to Mr. Crabe Angus : "Will you remember our poor Edinburgh Robin? Burns alone has been just to his promise; follow Burns, he knew best, he knew whence he drew fire - from the poor, white-faced, drunken, vicious boy that raved himself to death in the Edinburgh madhouse. I may tell you how I feel; we are three Robins who have touched the Scots lyre this last century. Well, the one is the world's, he did it, he came off, he is for ever; but I and the other - ! what bonds we have - born in the same city; both sickly; both pestered, one nearly to madness, one to the madhouse with a damnatory creed; both seeing the stars and the dawn, and wearing shoe leather on the same ancient stones where our common ancestors clashed in their armour, rusty or bright. And the old Robin who was before Burns and the flood, died in this acute, painful youth, and left the models of the great things that were to come; and the new, who came after, outlived his green sickness, and has faintly tried to parody the finished work. - - - command me to do anything you prefer - anything so that a monument

(after Burns's) be set up to my unhappy predecessor on the causey of Auld Reekie. You will never know, nor will any man, how deep this feeling is: I believe Fergusson lives in me." In another letter to Angus, he writes: "The true place for a monument to Fergusson were the churchyard of Haddington. But as that perhaps would not carry many votes, I should say one of the two following sites:- First, as near the site of old Bedlam as we could get, or second, beside the Cross, the heart of his city. Upon this I would have a fluttering butterfly, and, I suggest the citation - 'Poor butterfly, thy case I mourn' (from Fergusson's poem, 'On Seeing a Butterfly in the City Street.') For the case of Fergusson is not one to pretend about. A more miserable tragedy the sun never shone upon, or, considering our climate, I should rather say, refused to brighten."

(Letters of Robert L. Stevenson. Vol. II.)

Some idea of the life of the young poet who so excited the sympathies of Burns and Stevenson will give a better understanding of the conditions under which he lived and make clearer the contrasts and similarities of his life with that of Burns.

Robert Fergusson, the son of William Fergusson and Elizabeth Forbes, Aberdeenshire peasants, was born on the 5th of September, 1750, in Edinburgh where his father held a position as accountant in the British Linen Company. At an early age, the boy was sent to an English school in the city, taught by one Philip, from which he passed to the High School, where he went thru the usual classical course of four years, leaving in 1761 to become the beneficiary of a scholarship at the Grammar School of Dundee. This scholarship had been founded by a Rev. David Ferguson for "two poor male children of my own surname, not under nine years of age nor above the age of fourteen while they are at school." The patrons of the school were empowered to send promising boys to St. Leonard's College, St. Andrews, and in Feb. 1765, Fergusson,in his fifteenth year, went to St. Andrews. Here he studied the Latin and Greek classics, Mathematics and Natural Philosophy. It is on record that he was expelled from the University for riotous behaviour in 1767; his offense, however, cannot have been a very serious one, as he was almost immediately re-admitted. He had been intended for the ministry, but, leaving the University before his preparation for it was completed, he returned to

Edinburgh, and obtained a situation in the Office of Commissary Clerk. His daily work, which consisted mainly in copying extracts from deeds and protests, was distasteful to him and he sought relaxation in clubs and taverns, amusing the company he found there by his practical jokes and the liveliness of his verses. In time his health, always delicate, broke down under stress of his dissipated habits: loss of reason followed, and it became necessary to send him to a lunatic asylum, in which, after a confinement of two months, he died on the 16th of October, 1774, aged only twenty-four years.

(Poetical Works of Robert Fergusson.)

Burns's life is so well known that it is unnecessary to repeat biographical facts here except those that are in direct contrast or in striking similarity to Fergusson. Burns, too, was of Lowland Scotch peasantry, his father and mother having been born in Kincardineshire and Ayrshire respectively. Burns, however, was of country birth and lived there all his life except for the few months spent in Irvine and Edinburgh. Fergusson was a resident of Edinburgh except for very short visits with relatives in the country. Fergusson's education obtained in High School, Grammar School, and University is in sharp contrast to Burns's few weeks of study under

country schoolmasters and his father, for, at the age of fifteen, Burns's hap-hazard education was complete except for a few weeks spent in studying mensuration and surveying and the lifelong habit of reading and studying by himself. Their occupations - Fergusson, a scrivener or clerk,and Burns, a farmer and exciser, were distasteful as well as unremunerative to both. Fergusson died, penniless and alone, in an insane asylum in his twenty-fourth year and Burns, only thirty-seven, suffered his last illness under a cloud of disapproval of many of his former friends, worried by debts and in fear of being sent to prison.

Both men were possessed of magnetic personalities and convivial natures that made them welcome members of any social gathering which, according to the customs of the times, were held in inns and taverns. Fergusson was a member of the "Cape Club", a body whose members embraced all sorts and conditions of men, from actors and painters to burglars. Each member was nicknamed from some adventure which had befallen him and Fergusson became "Sir Precentor" because of certain practical jokes he had perpetrated when he held this office at the University of St. Andrews. Burns biography is full of references to his membership in the Masonic Lodge and

his love of the company and good cheer which he found in country taverns, especially during his term as excise-man. Both were fond of music and especially the Scotch songs. It is, perhaps, deserving of more than passing notice that woman played little or no part in Fergusson's life. He was distinctly a man's man, delighting in the social life of the clubs with their songs and frolics and general good fellowship. The Amandas and Stellas of his English poems are evidently mere poetic conventions without basis of reality. In his Scotch poems, where alone his true character appears, a woman's name is barely mentioned except with reprobation. In fact, Fergusson seems to have cared as little for feminine society as his great successor, Burns, was addicted to it in every shape, from an intrigue with a serving girl to a platonic correspondence with Clarinda and the stimulating friendship with Mrs. Dunlop. Stevenson has spoken of Fergusson as "a poor, drunken, vicious boy". Drunken he was, no doubt, too often, and drunken-ness, we are told in a characteristic Scotch phrase, leads to vice, but in Fergusson's case the second step was never taken.

As to the religion of the two men and their connection with the church, we find that Fergusson began to study for the ministry in the University but as he grew older, the calling did not appeal to him and he gave it up. In the last year of his life, after a period of mental and physical prostration following the excitement and riot of an election, when his mind gave way, his insanity took the form of religious mania. He abandoned his office work, threw his manuscripts into the fire and studied his Bible for hours. A paraphrase of Job's tremendous curse, composed at this time shows the character of these studies. Burns, with his frequent reprimands from the Kirk and his part in the dissensions and quarrels between the Auld and New Lights Clergy, was no less unfortunate. In his poems, Fergusson makes little or no discussion of his feelings and attitude toward God, the Church and his religious beliefs, but Burns's work throughout his life shows his liberality in theology that was so offensive to the orthodox churchmen. Burns said that an irreligious poet was a monster and his religion as expressed in his poems may be summed up in his belief in an all wise and benevolent God who is the Father of all, both rich and poor; in charity for all, even for Satan; that "The heart's aye the part aye

That makes us right or wrong;" and that patriotism is one of the noblest attributes of man.

Turning to the poetry of the two men with the view of particularizing it to find the relations between them we find that both wrote verse in English and the vernacular and in both cases the poorest work of each was done in English. Fergusson's first contributions to Ruddiman's Weekly, the magazine which first published his poems, were three pastorals: "Morning", "Noon", and "Night", pastorals of the dullest and most conventional type. Damon, Alexis, and Corydon recline on the slopes of the Pentlands and sing responsively of Aurora, Cynthia, and Sol, of the drooping olive and trembling zephyr. It was of the pseudo-classic fashion, then prevalent in England and without any of the power and fire of the poems he later wrote in the Scotch dialect. The poems written immediately after the Pastorals were all English. The sentimental "Complaint on the Decay of Friendship" and "A Saturday's Expedition" in mock heroics are good examples of the weakest of the poems in English. "The Town and Country Contrasted" and "On the Cold Month of April, 1771" are some of the best because they show real feeling and insight and are comparatively free from the numerous classical and mythological allusions that make

such poems as "The Rivers of Scotland", "The Simile", "Good Eating", "An Expedition to Fife", and "The Epilogue, Spoken by Mr. Wilson", seem strained and artificial. Of course, the Pastorals, the Odes, and some of the burlesques as the poems to "The Bugs", "The Complaint" and "Fashion" were meant to be artificial and bombastic, but in most of the other English poems, Fergusson gives this effect without really intending to do so. (1)

In "The Daft Days", Fergusson used the vernacular and a stanza form which originated in Provencal, was introduced into Scotland by the Semphills early in the seventeenth century, and was used by David Lindsay and Allan Ramsay before Fergusson. It was made so famous by Burns that it is known by his name. In all Fergussom wrote fourteen poems in the Burns metre. Other Scots poems - there were thirty-three in all - which followed "The Daft Days" are "The King's Birthday in Edinburgh", "The Farmer's Ingle", "Caller Oysters", "Braid Claith", "Elegy on the Death of Scots Music", "Hallow Fair", "Caller Water", "The Sitting" and "Rising of the Session", "Plainstanes and Causey", and "The Election", and among them are best examples of his use of the vernacular which have a simplicity, vividness, directness almost entirely lacking in the English poems. The ease and gracefulness

(1) Poetical Works of Robert Fergusson.

of his management of the metres used is in great contrast to the stilted measures of his English verse. Most of the Scots poems deal with some phase of Edinburgh life - Fergusson has been called the poet laureate of Edinburgh - and in them there is an appropriate use of a colloquial vocabulary which allows touches of homely humour and sentiment. (1)

That neither Fergusson nor Burns used the vernacular in anything like its entirety, but rather a conventionalized form of Scotch is a statement made in Emerson's History of the English Language and he quotes from Murray's "The Dialect of the Southern Counties of Scotland". "A man's a man for a' that" contains one hundred and fifteen words of which eighteen only are not English. "Duncan Gray cam here to woo", the different words in which number one hundred and seventeen, has thirty which are not English; and "Auld Lang Syne", out of eighty words, has twenty-four which an English reader would point out as Scotch. "Scots wha hae" with one hundred words has only nine not English."(II)This may be true of those named and some of the other poems written in the vernacular, or partly in the vernacular - three hundred and sixty-three in all - but in most of the Epistle satires and songs, a consistent use of the ver-

(1) Courthope's History of English Poetry Vol. VI.
(II) Emerson's History of the English Language.

nacular is made throughout. Among the poems included in the three hundred and sixty-three Scotch there are about thirty - ("Will Ye Go to The Indies, My Mary?" is an example) - where only two or three Scotch words are used. Burns used different proportions of Scotch dialects and literary English in his poems. "Tam O' Shanter" is an example of one of his poems written partly in English and partly in the vernacular and it is worthy of note that "the English parts of "Tam O' Shanter" have no particular merit as poetry - that is, "the only words in the only order" - and that the best of "Tam" is in the vernacular". (1) "The Cotter's Saturday Night" the "Vision", and the "Mountain Daisy" are other examples but in the matter of force and fire, brilliancy of direction, and finality of effect, they cannot be compared to "Hallowe'en", "Holy Willie", and "The Farmer to His Auld Man" where the use of the vernacular reaches its highest level. When Burns wrote English, as he did in two hundred and fifteen of his five hundred and seventy-eight poems, he was, as he himself confesses, using practically a foreign tongue - one in which he no more than Fergusson could express himself to any purpose; but when he uses the dialect which he had babbled in babyhood, and spoken as boy, youth and man, - to use his own words,

(I) W. E. Henley - Essay on Burns.

"he sings the sentiments and manners he saw and felt in himself and his rustic compeers, in his and their native language". These embrace descriptions of manners, satires, elegies, epistles, and folk songs. Of his English Poems - two hundred and fifteen in all - "The gloomy night is gathering fast" is said to be the best. They all show a mastery over the English language on its literary side gained from his habits of reading and study, but the vernacular verses are so much better that we rejoice because Burns's early acquaintance with Fergusson's poems "caused him to string anew his wildly sounding lyre with emulating vigour".(I)

As to classes of poems, we find that both wrote very little narrative verse, Fergusson's "Tale", the fable of "The Peasant, the Hen, and Young Ducks" and the two "Expeditions" being the only ones of his poems that have any narrative element at all, while "Tam O' Shanter" is the solitary example of Burns's wholly narrative verse. Both in early life attempted tragedy - Fergusson wrote two acts of a play founded on the life and achievements of William Wallace, and Burns, at eighteen, began a tragedy a few lines of which are left to us in a "Tragic Fragment", one of the two specimens of Burns's blank verse.

Both were lyrists - Fergusson is a social poet

(I) W. E. Henley - Essay on Burns.

and is at his best in the poems which represent people in their social relations and especially those which deal with Edinburgh life. Fergusson writes no love songs - his lyrics are all in praise of the good cheer and conviviality found in the taverns and clubs. Burns on the other hand lives, because of his three hundred songs - humorous,passionate, pathetic, patriotic, convivial. Burns found an endless store of old songs, sung by the Scotch people for centuries, and he took the familiar melody, and either composed entirely new words for it or altered the old version by a few touches or additions so that rudeness of structure and coarseness disappeared. He acknowledges his debt in this field to Ramsay and Fergusson, but here he owes more to Ramsay. Fergusson's dozen songs, of which seven were written to be sung to old tunes, seem a very small number compared to the number Ramsay wrote and altered for his "Tea Table Miscellany". A partial list of some of Burns's best songs will show how far ahead of Fergusson and Ramsay he was in this field. Among the songs which show mingled imagination and passion with a personal touch are: "Highland Mary", "Thou lingering star", "Of a' the airts", "Ae fond kiss", "Mary Morrison", "O wert thou in the cauld blast", and "Here's a health". Of the

same sort but more impersonal are: "How lang and drearie", "The Banks of Doon", "A red, red rose", "Coming Through the Rye", "Saw ye bonie Lesley", "O this is no my ain lassie", and "My Nanie O ". Those of universal appeal (not love songs): "John Anderson", "Auld Lang Syne", and "Scots whae hae". Songs with a lighter, more careless cast: "I'm o'er young", "Duncan Davison", "Duncan Gray", "Laddie, lie near me", "Whistle o'er the lave of it", "The Ranting Dog", "Amang the Corn Rigs", and "Green grow the rashes". Songs touched lightly with romance: "McPherson's Farewell", "The silver tassie", "My heart's in the highlands", and "It was for our own rightful king", "Willie brewed a peck o' maut" is a good example of Burns's rollicking drinking songs.

Other classes of poetry used by the two authors are rhymed epistles, elegies, satires, epigrams. Burns follows Fergusson's example in the use of the rhymed epistles and Fergusson's poetical correspondence with J. S. and Andrew Gray are followed by Burns's Epistles to John Rankin, J. Lapraik, John Golde, John McMath, James Smith, Dr. Blacklock, to Davie, Major Logan, John Maxwell, Col. DePeyster and numerous other friends. Fergusson's epigrams and short extemporaneous verses,

while they do not rank as high as Burns's in number or range of subjects, at least show that Burns found a precedent in Fergusson for his own poems of this class. Fergusson wrote all of his epigrams in English, while very few of Burns's are in other than pure Scotch dialect.

Of Fergusson's elegies - "On the Death of Scots Music", "On the Death of John Hogg", and "On the Death of David Gregory" are the best, and Burns follows with "Tam Samson's Elegy", "Elegy on Captain Henderson", and "Elegy on Sir James Hunter Blair" to say nothing of numerous epitaphs.

Fergusson's satires deal for the most part with phases of city life - the beggars who come to Edinburgh for gifts of money, clothes and a good dinner on the king's birthday, the City Guard with their poor arms and training, the honor paid to men because of their "gude Braid Claith", the qualifications of the candidates for election, and various customs of the citizens of Edinburgh in "Auld Reekie". They do not have the personal element which we find in Burns's, especially in the series of attacks he delivered against the Kirk in "The Holy Fair", "Address to the Deil", "The Twa Herds", "The Ordination","Holy Willie", "The Kirk's Alarm", The epistle "To the Unco Guid" and

"To John Goldie". Burns's quarrel with the kirk was a bitter one and here he was sometimes almost terrible and overwhelming. Fergusson and Burns both possessed the gift of sardonic raillery but Fergusson never gives vent to the scathing invective that Burns used. "Death and Dr. Hornbook" and "Hallowe'en" are good examples of the kindly satire similar to Fergusson's. Burns's "Twa Dogs", "A Man's a Man", and "Epistle to a Young Friend" contain understanding and appreciative comment on the social conditions of the time similar to that found in Fergusson's "Auld Reekie", "Braid Claith", "Hame Content", and "The Ghaists".

Both men have a sense of humour and it is best shown in their Scots poems. Both were fond of practical jokes and show their appreciation of them in many of their poems. A comparison of their humour will show that in the case of Fergusson, we have memories of his student days in the "Elegy on the Death of Gregory", "Elegy on John Hogg" and "To the Principal and Professors of the University". Here Fergusson displays his wit in a way that might be unpardonable in a man of more maturity. "The Daft Days", "Hallowfair", "Auld Reekie", "The King's Birthday" and the two poems on "The Session" relate to social life and especially its more riotous aspects. He

thoroughly enjoys the fun and frolic he pictures. "The Election" illustrates both the merits and the faults of Fergusson's humour. One or two passages are needlessly coarse but the vigor and clearness of the characters make up for the fault: the self-important deacon, the cobbler overjoyed at the prospect of a meal of creams and jellies instead of "bread and ingans" and the cooper complaining of his "geyz'd" barrel seem to stand out clearly before us. In "To My Auld Breeks", there is much fun at the threadbare condition of bards, regret at parting with old friends, and sly satire on the common ways of men. "Braid Claith",suggested by his own position and experience, shows a keen appreciation of the tendency of the world "to give to him that hath" and it is rather surprising that there is so little bitterness in it. "Leith Races", so closely imitated by Burns in his "Holy Fair",is perhaps Fergusson's best humourous poem but here Fergusson is merely amusing compared to the incisive humour of Burns. Like Fergusson, most of Burns's humour is mixed with satire as in "The Two Herds", "Death and Dr. Hornbook" and "The Holy Fair". Yet it is in poems unconnected with the Kirk that we have more of humour and very little satire. It is the quality of humour combined with vigorous narrative which leads most critics to rank "The Jolly Beggars" as the first of

Burns's works and to give "Tam O' Shanter" its place as a favorite Burns poem. "The Address to the Deil", "The Twa Dogs", "The Death of Mailie" and most of the epistles show this quality of Burns. At times, his humour is tender and full of sympathy, and though we find touches of this sympathy in Fergusson's so called "nature poems" "The Ode to the Bee" and "Ode to the Gowdspink", Burns's sympathetic understanding and humour in "Epistle to Davie", "Holy Fair", "Address to the Deil", "To a Louse" and "Duncan Gray", to name only a few poems, goes much farther beyond Fergusson's.

Although Fergusson was city-born and bred, and gives us better and more realistic pictures of city life than Burns, yet when he leaves the city as he does in "Auld Reekie" to enjoy the green fields that border the streets on Castlehill, he delights in them for their own sakes. In "Hame Content" and "The Farmer's Ingle" we find him expressing his pleasure in Scottish scenery and national associations with patriotic fervor. "The Daft Days" shows something of the inspiration he gained from Scotch manners and landscape. "The Ode to the Bee" illustrates the connection in the mind of the poet between man and the lower creation. The moralizing is, it is true, somewhat hackneyed; but the conclusion in which his Muse is likened to the bee is anything but commonplace.

"On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street" begins with a likening the insect to a human butterfly, who seeks strange scenes to display his finery;- pity is expressed for the forlorn creature so out of its natural element, and the poems ends with a parallel between the fate of the plain man ruined by courts and that of the luckless strayed butterfly. The "Ode to the Gowdspink" is the best example of Nature treated without reference to man and here we find praise of the bird's beauty worthy of the subject.

It is natural that Burns, living as he did in the country and spending most of his time in the open air, should have a deeper and more intense consciousness of and a greater enthusiasm for Nature. In "The Vision", Coila is represented as explaining to him that this fondness for Nature was one of the signs by which she knew him to be the poet of Scotland. In his "Commonplace Book", Burns tells of his desire to write verse that shall make the "fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequested scenes on Ayr, and the mountainous source and winding sweep of the Doon emulate the Tay, Forth, Ettrick and Teed". He seems to limit his treatment of Nature to these scenes for he never enters into any lengthy discussion of the mountains and sea so near him. Burns goes beyond Fergusson in his use of Nature as a background

for man's emotions. This appears most frequently in the love songs. The use of Nature as a key note of the human emotions it accompanies is found in "Afton Water", "The Farewell Song to the Banks of Ayr", "Raving Winds around Her Blowing" and "Farewell to Ballochmyle". Sometimes Nature is represented in contrast to the human emotions, as in"The Chevalier's Lament", "The Lament of Mary Queen of Scots", or best of all, "The Banks of Doon". Burns's sympathy with nature was even keener in animate than inanimate nature. His life on the farm made him think of animals, especially the farm animals, as being almost human. "He thinks on winter nights of "ourie cattle" and"silly sheep" and helpless birds that "cow'r" with "chittering wing". He scorned hunting as "On seeing a wounded hare" attests for he could not reconcile "sport" with kindness. The birds and flowers he knew in an intimate,friendly fashion and delighted in the changing landscape. All his descriptions of nature abound in striking epithets which show his accuracy of observation. If the poem "To a Mountain Daisy" does verge on sentimentality and "pathetic fallacy", it is because of the human element associated with it. In "To a Mouse" Burns expresses the close kinship of the fates of man and the mouse and the "wee, timorous beastie" is nearer to his heart than the "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower".

Fergusson delighted in Nature but he did not give it the close connection with humanity that we find in Burns's "The Auld Farmer's Salutation to his Mare Maggie". The two, the Farmer and the Mare, have grown old together and the animal has been so closely associated with the man's pleasures and troubles that he sees in her an animated chronicle of his own life. "The Twa Dogs" also, as well as giving a criticism of two ranks of society, shows the intimate connection of man with "his best friend" among the animals.

As to the verse forms used by both poets, we find that Fergusson sets a precedent for Burns in his use of the old Provencal bob-wheel stanza of two rhymes, 4a,4a,4a,2b,4a,2b. After Burns's time, this form was known as the Burns stanza, more because he made it famous than anything else, for it had been introduced by the Semphills and used by many Scotch poets previous to Fergusson. Fergusson wrote fourteen of his thirty-three Scots poems in this form, none in English, and these poems include most of his best ones as "King's Birthday", "Caller Oysters", "Elegy on the Death of Scots Music", "Iron Kirk Bell", "Sitting" and "Rising of the Session", "Braid Claith", "Daft Days", two elegies and two epistles, as well as "Caller Water" and "Visiting Dumfries". Burns followed with forty-four in the Burns stanza all in Scotch dialect

and including most of his elegies, epistles and satires.

Fergusson used the heroic couplet in fifteen poems including both Scots and English: Burns used it in twenty poems most of which are English. Fergusson used the elegiac stanza in six English and Scots poems, and Burns used it in twenty poems most of which are English. Fergusson has eight specimens of the ballad stanza to Burns's ninety-seven, but the great number of songs Burns produced accounts for the difference in proportion. Fergusson used the blank verse form nine times to Burns's two, but Burns's subjects could not be appropriately developed in blank verse. Fergusson showed his classical training in the use of the ode form nine times to Burns's seven. Many other irregular forms were used by both poets. The use of the Spenserian stanza by both Fergusson and Burns in the "Farmer's Ingle" and "Cotter's Saturday Night" is an example of a verse form seldom used by either and so not included in this list.

Of separate poems, in which Burns has been said to have directly imitated, gathered inspiration, or taken hints from Fergusson, the following list taken from various sources is given: "Leith Races" by Fergusson furnished the model for Burns's "Holy Fair" we are told by Gilbert Burns. In both the stanza form of nine lines of alternate four and three iambic feet till the ninth

line of two iambs. In "Leith Races", Fergusson in July meets Mirth who invites him to go for a holiday with him on Leith Sands. Burns meets,"on a simmer morn", Fun who takes him with her to see the doings of Mauchline Holy Fair on Communion Sunday. Burns in this as in "The Ordination", a similar subject, goes farther than Fergusson in his realistic pictures of Scotch peasant life and their attitude toward religion.

Fergusson's "Hallowfair" and Burns's "Hallowe'en" have the same stanza form as the two poems cited above and have very similar descriptions of the customs of that season in the town and country.

Fergusson's "Complaint of the Plainstaines and Causey" served Burns as a model for his "Brigs of Ayr" and "Twa Dogs" in their discussions of the social life of the higher and lower classes of the day.

Fergusson's "On Seeing a Butterfly in the Street" may not have influenced Burns very much but no one can doubt that the intimate sympathy and tenderness in Burns's "To a Mouse" and "To a Daisy" is similar to Fergusson's "mourning" over the fate of the butterfly.

Burns himself tells us that Fergusson's "Caller Water" was the model for his own "Scotch Drink". Both are the Burns stanza form and similar in their praise of the water of St. Anthony's Well and Scotch whiskey.

Fergusson's "My Ain Kind Deary O" was an earlier version of Burns's song for the same air, - "I'll Meet Thee on the Lea-Rig" in which the words "My ain kind dearie O" form the last line of every stanza as in Fergusson's song.

Fergusson's "Elegy on the Death of Scots Music" is similar to Burns's "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson" in that both use the Burns stanza and both lament the passing away of patriotic Scotsmen. All nature is called upon to join in the mourning for these patriots who held Scotland above all other countries.

In Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle", Burns found his stanza form and subject for his "Cotter's Saturday Night", and in both poems are found similar descriptions, characters and treatment of Scotch peasant life that Fergusson found in his infrequent visits to the country and Burns had known all his life.